

A COWARD.

It was a cold day in the latter part of November. The sky was gray, and a thin snow was sprinkling itself over the dried, yellow grass along the roadside, and into the stark, leafless branches of the trees in the woods.

From the chimney of the little log school house at the edge of the woods, the smoke was coming out in a thick, black column, which the north wind blew back into the underbrush.

A little crowd of school boys came briskly along the road clapping their red hands and stamping their feet to keep them warm. They were talking loudly about the freezing of the creek. One pulled his tattered cap further down over his ears, and thrusting his hands into his trouser pockets, said:

"Naw, it ain't froze. Never freezes till 'way 'long in December. Mebbe yuh can skate up to Smith's by Sunday if this cold snap keeps up, but it won't be froze up to the mill fur nearly a month, and that's the only real good place to skate."

"I don't care, Jim," said a stout little fellow, tossing four or five strapped books over his shoulder, "I'm goin' today. It's sure to be all right jest below Smith's, and who's afraid anyway? I say, lets go right after school."

A little apart from the group, a boy walked alone. He was a head taller than the rest, a well-built fellow, but his shoulders stooped and he let his head fall forward.

A heavy muffler was wrapped around his neck, and he wore a great woolen cap and overcoat. He did not lift his feet from the ground when he walked, but shuffled them along in an uncertain way. He glanced up at the last speech and spoke for the first time.

"Ye'll all git drowned."

"Fraid cat, coward—we kin swim I guess. Who's asking you to go, Jake Brown?" the others answered him.

He reddened, and then said sheepishly, "The ice ain't froze thick."

"Tis too. Why see! the brook is solid," said one, and he jumped up and down on the ice.

The others followed his example, and soon they were all sliding on the narrow strip of ice, except Jake, who watched them for awhile, and then turned away to the left.

"Where yuh goin'?" some one called to him.

"Up here," he said.

"What for? Oh, to cross. Hi! Look at him boys. He's going up to cross on the logs! Hi! Baby!"

The boys started after him.

"Come back an' cross here," they cried

When he saw them coming, he gave a cry and took to his heels. But they caught him and then, some pulling, some pushing, they got him on the ice.

"Oh, don't boys" he pleaded, whimpering a little. "Ohh,—don't." I don't want to go on the ice. Ma said I musn't go on the ice. Ohh—ee!" and he slipped and fell heavily.

The boys gathered around him, shouting in derision. He picked himself up, but they would not allow him to get to the bank, and he was afraid to walk much on the ice, so he stood still in abject misery, his feet turned well in, one hand in his pocket, and wiping the tears out of his eyes with the red mitten on the other.

Presently the school bell rang, and the boys hurried away. Jake walked cautiously to the edge of the ice, and then ran after them.

Inside the schoolroom, most of the pupils were gathered around the red hot iron stove. Some of the boys were talking "dares" as to who could hold his hand nearest the hot stove. They dared Jake to do it, but he drew back, and im-

mediately went to his seat.

The teacher, a nervous little man, with fair hair and pale, bluish green eyes, sharply called them to order, and school began.

Jake failed in everything. He was not a bright pupil in any of his studies except Arithmetic and even of this he knew nothing today. The teacher, finally exasperated at his mistakes, ordered him to "step up and be flogged."

Jake shrank back into his seat.

"I don't want to," he said faintly.

"Then I'll come after you," the teacher answered.

"Jake Brown, step up to the desk," he thundered at the great trembling boy.

Jake obeyed slowly. As he started to the front, his shoulders seemed more stooped than ever before, and his head fell lower.

The teacher, growing angrier and more impatient every moment, started hastily down the room, meeting the boy midway, near the stove.

"Hurry," he said, and reddened angrily.

Jake stepped up to him. His face was ashen white and his lips trembled. He raised one great hand and pushed a long straggling lock of hair out of his eyes.

The teacher raised the pointer high and brought it down on Jake's back. The boy screamed and began to cry as the blows came faster. The little teacher's face was very red and his jaws were set angrily.

He caught the pointer in both hands and raised it high with all his strength. It hit the low stove-pipe with a resounding whak! He looked up, surprised, and gazed at the pipe. It swung back and forth a little, the wire which had fastened it to the ceiling, dangling loose. Then, with a rasping sound, the pipe fell apart and down to the floor.

The teacher stood still, both hands raised in front of his face, his clothes covered with falling soot.

Jake gazed in horror for a moment. Then he bent over and picked up the red hot stove-pipe. As he straightened himself he seemed to grow nearly two feet taller.

Dragging one of the benches forward with his foot, he stepped on it and replaced the pipe. The master had sunk into a chair and the pupils were huddled in corners.

As Jake stepped down from the bench, a little flame shot up from his coat. He gathered up the heavy cloth and crushed it in his hands. Then he picked up the pointer and handed it to the master. But it dropped from the master's nerveless hands.

HARRIET COOKE.

Two of the elect were recently discussing the fall of one of the deacons of their church. One, shaking his head, sighed:

"A dreadful blow, brother; he was one of the pillars of the church—"

"Would it not be wiser," interposed a listener, "to call him a flying buttress?"

"Yes," said the hardware man, "it makes me nervous to hear that a wheel-man has punctured his tire."

"How is that?"

"I'm always expecting that some member of the confraternity will inaugurate a movement to prohibit the manufacture of tacks."

Friend—On de dead level, didn't you break into dat house?

Burglar (in jail)—Well, I tought I did, but me lawyer proved dat it couldn't have been me what did dat job.

Satan—Those last arrivals are too fresh.

Imp—What's the trouble?

Satan—They keep telling me I'm not so warm.

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In case of a tie the list which is neatest and best will be given preference. The complete list winning first prize will be published.

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For the Third Largest List

Residents of Omaha and winners of former prizes in the WORLD-HERALD contests are not permitted to compete, directly or indirectly.

This contest does not close until February 15, 1898, but a SPECIAL ADDITIONAL PRIZE of

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Sent in during December. It is possible, of course, that the list winning this special prize will also be entitled to the first prize of \$100.00; in which event one person will receive \$125.00.

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